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## THE FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS OF HAPPINESS, AS REVEALED IN JESUS' BEATITUDES.<sup>1</sup>

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By PRESIDENT HENRY CHURCHILL KING, D.D.,  
Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.

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WHAT are the basic qualities in life? That is, what are the qualities essential to character, to happiness, and to influence? The question is absolutely vital. Has a precise and commanding answer ever been given?

The Beatitudes of Christ, I suppose, are intended to give just such an answer. In them the supreme artist in living, facing the whole problem of life for all men, distinctly challenges the ruling conceptions of his time, and definitely points out the qualities of character that must mark the citizen of the coming civilization of brotherly men; and declares that these qualities are at the same time the supreme conditions of happiness, and that they contain as well the secret of all powerful influence for good.

These, then, Christ seems to say, are the basic qualities of character: teachable, penitent, self-controlled, genuinely earnest in the pursuit of the highest, sympathetic with men, reverent toward men, promoting love among men, sacrificing for men. Without attempting to discuss these qualities in character, let us notice simply that just these same qualities, Christ believes, are the supreme conditions of happiness as well. Indeed, as the repeated "blessed" implies, he seems to have had this thought first of all in mind. He faced, as does every man, a code of the world, that runs much like this:

Happy are the proud, for theirs is this world.

Happy are the unscrupulous, for they shall need no comfort.

Happy are those who claim everything, for they shall possess the earth.

Happy are those who hold back from no sin, for they shall drain pleasure's cups.

<sup>1</sup>A sermon delivered in the chapel of the University of Chicago, on Sunday, January 17, 1904.

Happy are tyrants, for they need no mercy.

Happy are they to whose lust no bound can be put, for they shall see many harlots.

Happy are they who can stir anger unhindered, whose ambition is unchecked, for they shall be as gods.

Happy are they who have never sacrificed, for theirs is all the world.

And over against these judgments of the world Christ sets his own, in which he deliberately challenges and reverses every statement of this world's code. And the blessing—the happiness—that he promises, in each case grows inevitably out of the quality named. And it is just this inevitable connection that we are specially to consider.

He promises the highest good—the kingdom of God—to the humble, not to the proud. For no good can be finally withheld from the teachable, since he possesses the prime condition of growth, and no limits can be set to his attainment. The growing life is the life of continuous youth and of continuous joy. The humble is open to the best that either God or man can give. Of course, then, potentially the kingdom of heaven is already his, as Christ says. What source of happiness is more fundamental than this possibility of endless progress? And how certainly is its great condition this single moral quality of teachableness!

So, too, Christ is confident that it is not the unscrupulous and the conscienceless to whom can come any final comfort. To lose sensitiveness of conscience is to lose, at the same time, that sensitiveness to personal relations which is the inevitable condition of all the finest and highest happiness. It shuts one out inviolably from the best joys of the two greatest sources of happiness—work and friendship. Christ knows that men are made on too large a plan to be really satisfied with an impenitent life. They are made for personal relations, made for love, made for work that is service; and the soul that has no sorrow for its sins against love is shut out by flaming swords from any true paradise. The penitent alone shall be really comforted—comforted with the only true comfort of the assurance of steady progress into that character whose lack they mourn. The conscienceless man must live the life of a being continually baffled of the end for which it was made. The penitent spirit, the sensitive conscience, is an

indispensable condition of the finest joys that the life of man affords.

To the meek, Christ promises that they shall inherit the earth ; that is, I suppose, that they shall really get the most out of life now and here. He commends the quality as the one royal road to the best enjoyment of life, even as it passes. And this for several reasons. In the first place, because humility and penitence, the implications of meekness, and the spirit that refuses to make extravagant claims for self, themselves remove the chief sources of unrest and discontent ; for, as Drummond says, "wounded vanity, disappointed hopes, unsatisfied selfishness, these are the old, vulgar, universal sources of man's unrest." Now, these sources the spirit of meekness attacks at the root, and, therefore, tends naturally to give one some real opportunity for peace and joy. Moreover, the spirit of meekness with its implied humility, because it carries with it a modest estimate of self, escapes the feeling of being constantly slighted and offended. As it does not feel that everything is due to it, so it is content and cheerful where pride and assumption would be only miserable. And such a spirit gets far more out of life. Reducing our pretensions is good counsel for cheerfulness. We may learn to be content.

And, as modest and free from the envious spirit, the meek are able also to enter into the joy of others, and so to share in a very real sense in all joy. They own the world.

The spirit of meekness, too, has a natural effect on others. In the case of those who claim everything for themselves, others naturally oppose ; but one gives gladly to the meek. They readily secure the good-will of all, and so come easily and naturally into the best of life.

Moreover, as self-control, even under provocation, meekness has a very real contribution to make to the enjoyment of life. He rules all who rules himself. He has himself always in hand, and therefore loses no opportunity ; he can continually sacrifice the lower to the higher, the temporary to the permanent, and so find life meaning ever more and more to him. The largest inheritance cannot help being his. The best things in life are always

only for the self-controlled. There is no possibility of the highest attainment anywhere along any line without self-control.

And, once more, meekness gets the most out of life in still another sense. It inevitably deepens the inner life of the man himself. Holding one's self perpetually at one's highest, in one's strongest mood, carries sure results in the self in a steady deepening of the significance of life. You cannot get the most out of pleasure, even on the sense-plane, without self-mastery at the moment. Surely the meek shall inherit the earth. They get the most out of life even now and here. Here, doubtless, is a fundamental condition of happiness.

Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness Christ pronounces blessed because they shall be filled—filled with that for which they hunger—genuine righteousness. They shall share the character and so the life, of God. Christ evidently counts God's life as a life of highest blessedness as well as of character; and he cannot conceive how anyone can come, therefore, into the highest blessedness without coming at the same time into character. The promise of the new kingdom, then, is not merely some substitute for righteousness, some makeshift for it, some simply treating a man as if he were righteous, but by the divine coworking, the making of him righteous. The insatiable thirst for character shall be quenched. He who has this eager, positive desire cannot be satisfied without real character. Not what men think him, but what he is, troubles him. Is it intolerable to you that you should be proud, impenitent, contemptuous, censorious, without self-control, false, impure, and unloving? Is your deepest ambition the ambition for righteousness? God will not fail you. You shall be filled. It is the deadliest of all revelations of character, on the other hand, that one does not care for the best. And that means that he has definitely given up the highest end for which he was made; he has strayed from his orbit; he is fundamentally out of harmony with the aims of the universe in which he is; he is at ceaseless war with God's own purpose of love. He has, therefore, made any deep and abiding happiness impossible. The deepest condition of happiness is the eager, persistent pursuit of character.

And the merciful shall obtain mercy—of God and of men. “With what measure you measure, it shall be measured unto you.” It is the unjust and the unmerciful that provoke retaliation. The very bearing of the hard man calls out hardness. He does not even know how to make a gracious appeal for sympathy. We speak literally of such a one when we say: “He does not appeal to me.” On the other hand the habitual mood and manner of the sympathetic win; they get mercy. He who has habitually entered with real sympathy into the life of others will not be left alone at the end. One may be admired, envied, deferred to, feared; but if he has been unmerciful, his doom is coming; even by men he will be left in the dreadful loneliness of the selfish life. He will seek for mercy and not find it. He has cut the bonds that bind him to men. He abides alone. Brilliant, selfish, hard, scheming men get their reward even here. They have made impossible the best gifts of friendship—the surest source of happiness.

And the unmerciful spirit works an even greater damage to the inner man. The fundamentally unmerciful are scarcely able to understand, to believe in, or to receive mercy, even of God. “Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy”—of men, of God.

It is a practically universal law: men tend to respond in like coin to what you bring—mercy with mercy, frankness with frankness, deceit with deceit, distrust with distrust, insistence on legal rights with the same.

Be noble, and the nobleness that lies  
In other men, sleeping, but never dead,  
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own:  
Then wilt thou see it gleam in many eyes,  
Then will pure light around thy path be shed,  
And thou wilt nevermore be sad and lone.

And the blessing of mercy has a yet deeper root. Man is made for personal relations. When he refuses that sympathy without which personal relations can never deepen, he shuts the door upon happiness. He cannot be happy in hard lack of sympathy. Mercy is a prime condition of happiness.

The blessing of the pure in heart is the vision of God. And to see God, Christ is sure, means great joy. Our highest joy is always joy in personal life; and the more rich and significant the personality, the greater the gift to life which the revelation of that personality has to make. He who gets the vision of the riches of the life of God has, therefore, unfathomable resources of joy. And just this, Christ insists, is the happiness of the pure in heart.

It is no random promise which Christ so makes. The connection between the quality and the promised blessing is close and inevitable. Reverence for the person against strong passion naturally leads to the higher reverence to which God reveals himself. For all reverence is really of a piece; since to see and recognize God in men ought naturally to give power to see God in himself. To be pure in heart, therefore, is to see God.

Christ's fundamental teaching of the fatherhood of God brings us to the same result. For this means that God desires to reveal himself as fully as possible to men, and waits only for the capacity of vision in men. But the completest and deepest revelation of personality, human or divine, can be made only to the reverent. You do not reveal your best and holiest to the profane, to the scornful, to the heedless, to the irreverent. If you tried to do so he could not receive it. The real meaning of the revelation lies quite beyond him. To the reverent, then, shall be peculiarly given the vision of God. And reverence is found at its highest only in the pure in heart. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."

Would you see God? Men have talked much of the "beatific vision," and have had many counsels for attaining seraphic experiences and visions of God. Christ seems to say: "The way is nigh thee, at thy very hand." Say not: "Who shall ascend into heaven, or descend into the deep?" Only be pure; recognize the child of God in every soul, and treat him accordingly, not as a thing, but as a person. What nearness to God in such a victory! "You shall see me," Christ seems to say; "right there you shall find me." "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me;" "he that

receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." How quickly and inevitably a little impurity clouds our vision of God! Reverence is our window manward, Godward; impurity clouds it. This is, then, no chance connection. God reveals himself to the reverent soul and most of all to the soul that is reverent throughout and under the severest pressure. Be right with men and you shall find God. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

To the peace-maker Christ promises the happiness of the children of God. Naturally so; for the work of promoting peace and love among men is the very work of God himself. Those who enter pre-eminently into that work share God's own joy of giving, and not merely receiving; they enter as sons into the work and joy of the Father. Surely, they shall be, and be called, sons of God. Steadily there shall deepen for them the sense of their kinship with God, the high meaning of this highest personal relation. As they enter more and more into God's loving purpose for men, their own sense of his love shall strengthen and the joy of the full consciousness of sonship be theirs. And they shall have the added joy that men will increasingly recognize their spirit and call them children of God. The unselfish, peace-making life shall not be permanently misunderstood.

And Christ is not afraid to face, even from the point of view of happiness, the quality called for in the last beatitude. In unflinching tones he says: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He knows that men are made for love and for high action—for heroic service; and they cannot be really satisfied with less. Unhesitatingly, therefore, he appeals to the experience of the prophets, and he rings out to men the challenge of his own heroic call—to take up the cross and follow him. "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of." And, like him, his disciples must be able to "take the cup and give thanks." Blinding himself in no way to the sins of men, no religious teacher ever believed so much in the essential possibilities and glory of men. He calls to courageous self-sacrifice, and yet expects loyal,



enthusiastic following. He knows, as Hinton puts it, that "all pains may be summed up in sacrifice, and sacrifice is the instrument of joy." As George Eliot says :

We can indeed only have the highest happiness, such as goes with being a great man, by having wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we should choose above everything.

This is only part of that great paradox of life which Christ so plainly saw. He who would save his life must lose it. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone."

No wonder that Christ promises to this courageous, suffering, self-sacrificing love the kingdom of heaven—not merely potentially, as to the humble, but actually. Joyful, self-sacrificing love has the kingdom, already possesses it in its own heart. Love is the supreme gift and includes all else. It is life at its highest, God's own life, "the life that is life indeed." It never fails.

This is the one eternal thing. To such Christ must say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The best, the eternal best, belongs to love—is love. "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." They share, as no others can, the full inner depth of the very meaning of the life and joy of God.

In all this, Christ does not play with the problem of human happiness. He loves men; and he loves them too much to wish to cheat them with husks. He knows well that he who would make men deeply and permanently happy cannot stop on the surface, as most pleasure-seekers and pleasure-makers do, but must pierce deeply to the heart of man's being, must see how great he is, and satisfy the greatest in him. The conditions of happiness, therefore, which he prescribes, are fundamental and thoroughgoing. Here, in the Beatitudes, are the great conditions of the happiness of life. These qualities are the inevitable conditions of growth, and of the highest work and friendship; and these alone insure happiness.